

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 1351

DEPT PASS ALL ARA CAPITALS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR ETRD VE US

SUBJ: VIEWS OF VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT ON U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN
RELATIONS AND SPECIFICALLY U.S. TRADE ACT

1. DURING A 40 MINUTE CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ FOR THE PURPOSE OF INTRODUCING MY OLD FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE JAMES THEBERGE, WHO IS HEAD OF THE LATIN AMERICAN STUDY GROUP SERVING VICE PRESIDENT ROCKEFELLER'S COMMISSION ON CRITICAL CHOICES FOR AMERICANS, THE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT HELD OUT AT GREAT LENGTH OVER HIS CONCERN AT DETERIORATING U.S.-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONSHIPS.

2. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE HAD NO DIFFICULTY AT THE DIPLOMATIC LEVEL OR IN DEALING WITH THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE USG. HOWEVER, HE WAS INCREASINGLY CONCERNED THAT THROUGHOUT LATIN AMERICA IN GENERAL THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES WERE BECOMING DISAFFECTED WITH THE UNITED STATES. IN AN ASIDE HE SAID THAT THIS WAS MANIFESTED EVERY DAY IN VENEZUELA AS WE OURSELVES MIGHT HAVE NOTICED IN DEMONSTRATIONS THIS MORNING MOUNTED BY THE MIR AGAINST THE UNITED STATES.

(I SAID THAT FOR THIS REASON WE HAD COME TO THE PALACE BY FORD AND NOT BY OFFICIAL CADILLAC.) THE PRESIDENT ADDED THAT LARGER AND MORE IMPORTANT OPPOSITION PARTIES SUCH AS COPEI DID NOT HESITATE IN TAKING SIDES WITH THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS, SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY SOUGHT TO ATTACK THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

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3. THE PRESIDENT THEN SET OUT ON HIS WELL-TROD PATH DENOUNCING THE U.S. TRADE ACT. HE SAID NOT ONLY WAS VENEZUELA INJURED BY THIS LEGISLATION BUT OTHER LATIN AMERICAN REPUBLICS AS WELL. HERE HE CITED THE FIVE CENTRAL AMERICAN REPUBLICS AND BRAZIL, ADDING THAT HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED AND PLEASED WHEN THE PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL SUPPORTED HIS STAND AGAINST THE TRADE ACT AND HAD CAUSED PEREZ'S LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF ECUADOR TO BE PUBLISHED IN BRAZILIAN PAPERS.

4. CAP COMPLAINED (SEE HIS GENERAL COMMENT ON OAS IN CARACAS 1352) THAT THE COMBINED LATIN AMERICAN GRIEVANCE AGAINST THE TRADE ACT IN OAS HAD "BEEN IGNORED" BY THE U.S.

5. THE PRESIDENT ASKED IF THERE WAS ANY CHANCE OF MODIFYING THE U.S. TRADE ACT, TO WHICH THEBERGE REPLIED THAT, AS HE KNEW, THE ADMINISTRATION HAD INDEED OPPOSED CERTAIN OF THE MORE DISCRIMINATORY PROVISIONS OF THE ACT, BUT HE MUST BE AWARE THAT THE U.S. CONGRESS WAS A SEPARATE BRANCH OF OUR GOVERNMENT, AND IT WAS NOT EASY TO PREDICT WHAT THAT CONGRESS MIGHT DO IN TERMS OF ULTIMATELY REVISING THE ACT.

6. COMMENT: THERE WAS NOTHING IN CAP'S ATTITUDE TO DIMINISH OUR FEELING THAT, DESPITE FREQUENT ASSEVERATIONS OF "NO DESIRE TO FIGHT THE UNITED STATES," THE PRESIDENT RELISHES HIS ROLE OF DAVID AGAINST GOLIATH.

MCCLINTOCK

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ALL ARA CAPTIALS

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